

Necks Please!



INNOCENT
BLOOD

12 years on from when he brought us *An American Werewolf In London*, director John Landis reckons he hasn't forgotten what it takes to make a good horror film. Anne (*Nikita*) Parillaud is the vampish vixen who only chomps down on bad guys in the gory Landis movie *Innocent Blood*. We love a bit of biting satire, so we decided to investigate on your behalf - you can say *fangs* later...



Anyone who has seen *An American Werewolf In London* must surely realise that John Landis (who wrote and directed that immortal classic) really loves horror movies. But he seems to have stayed well clear of the genre for a while now, preferring to concentrate on hit comedies like *Coming To America* and *Trading Places* (though you may have spotted him in acting cameos in *Darkman*, *Sleepwalkers* and *Spontaneous Combustion*).

However, he's now back doling out the blood and gore by the bucket-load in his most recent screen outing, a vampire thriller entitled *Innocent Blood*. In a switch on the traditional formula, the main vampire is a female. But that doesn't make her any less formidable, particularly as she's played by Anne Parillaud (of *Nikita* fame). Parillaud is an ageless bloodsucker named Marie. Like we said, she's a vampire, but that doesn't make her a bad person. In fact she only preys on thoroughly evil people, taking care to shoot her victims in the head after she's drained their

blood, so they don't return from the dead as vampires themselves.

With a Pittsburgh mob war going on, she has a perfect cover for her activities. Notorious Mafioso Sal 'The Shark' (Robert Loggia) is bumping off people left, right and centre, and the cops don't think twice that maybe not all of the mobsters turning up on slabs at the morgue are Loggia's handiwork. At an early stage our bloodsucking heroine sets out to put the bite on one of Loggia's underlings (Anthony LaPaglia), but spares him because she sense an inner goodness - unbeknownst to her at the time, he's an undercover cop!

Parillaud then marks out the brutal Loggia as her number one victim. He thinks he's about to get lucky when she accompanies him to his luxury mansion. But she's soon tearing his throat out and drinking his blood! He manages to shoot her in the struggle, however, and the shot alerts his waiting driver, forcing Parillaud to flee before she can deliver the killing bullet. Consequently she realises she has created a monster,

and when the wicked gang lord rises from the dead he immediately makes plans to start up a new branch of the Cosa Nostra - staffed exclusively by vampires!

Landis would like us all to interpret *Innocent Blood* as a satire on the genre interrupted by periodic outbursts of gruesome violence. "This movie is terribly funny," he insists, "and I deliberately made it so because it was inherent in the material. But it's *not* a comedy. I had that problem with *An American Werewolf In London*, where it was not a comedy, but it was funny, and people didn't know how to deal with it. Now the audiences for this sort of thing are far more sophisticated, and much more acclimatised to dealing with the funny and the grotesque and the same time, like in *Beetlejuice*."

As you can see from the pictures we've published here, when you're finished laughing you may very well want to throw up. Make-up ace Steve Johnson supplied the all-too-realistic autopsy corpses, plus a show-stopping shock scene where a vampire lawyer



(Don Rickles) disintegrates after being struck by the rays of the sun. "Don went through the tortures of the damned," laughs Landis. "His make-ups were so long. The little scene where he dies, he went through four days and he had about seven different make-ups. The crew loved him because he was always insulting me. They were quite sad when he left."

You'll remember that in the classic Hammer horrors of the '50s and '60s all it took for Chris Lee's vampire count to turn a gal into a vampire was a discreet nip on the neck. "My movie is very different," explains Landis. "My vampires don't have fangs, for a start. And they don't make little puncture marks. They rip your throat out and sup on your blood. And the victims don't swoon. The victim is now dead, and since he's been drained of blood he has a very ghastly appearance."

"Once they go through whatever logic is involved to rise from the dead, they don't look so good, because they are in desperate need of blood. It's more than food, it's more than drugs, it's beyond addiction. It's like the way you desperately fight for oxygen even when you're unconscious."

Yes, it's sounding more like a com-

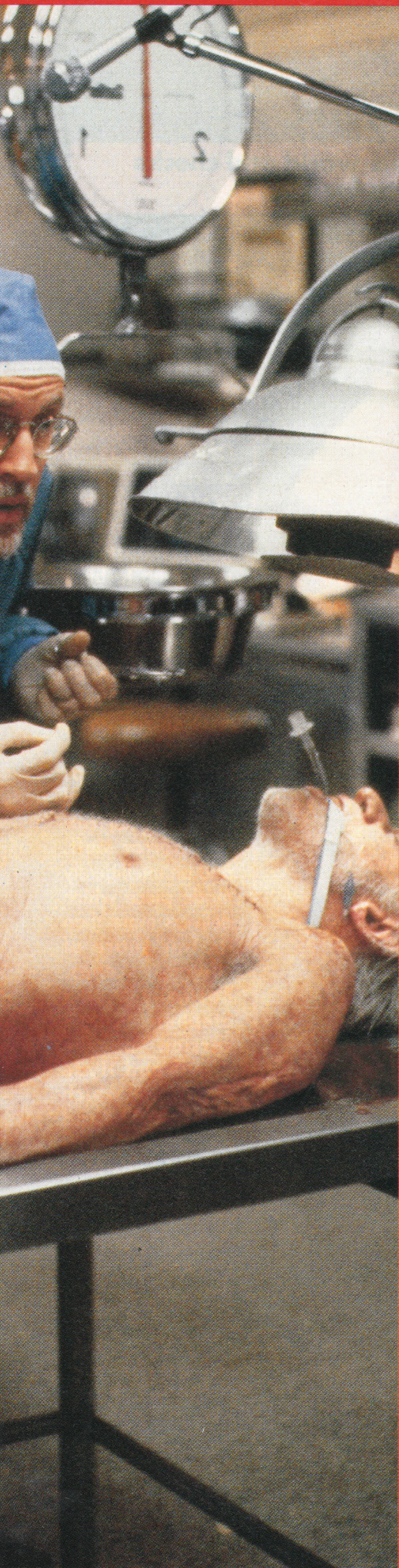
edy all the time...

If you're a dyed-in-the-wool horror buff you'll certainly enjoy spotting the film's many references to old vampire movies, and there are fun cameos by genre gurus Dario Argento (as an ambulance attendant) and Sam Raimi (as a meat locker worker). Other cameos include comic book publisher Russ Cochrane as a derelict, make-up wizard Tom Savini as a reporter, Linnea Quigley (who is married to Steve Johnson), and *Famous Monsters* editor Forrest J. Ackerman.

To reward those who have been following Landis movies for a while there's the by-now-obligatory reference to *See You Next Wednesday*, a mythical in-joke movie that's referred to in every one of the director's films (for example, you'll notice it's playing at the porno cinema where *An American Werewolf* breaks loose). In case you're mystified, this is the director's favourite line of dialogue from *2001: A Space Odyssey*...

Landis explains that he has been avoiding horror films for a while because he didn't want to get typecast in the genre. "My first movie (*Schlock*) was a comedy monster movie; my second film (*Kentucky Fried Movie*) was a parody; my third film (*Animal House*)





was a hugely successful comedy; my fourth film (*Blues Brothers*) was a musical comedy - and then I finally got the money to make this monster movie I'd been wanting to make for a long time!

"In fact I am offered horror and science fiction movies all the time. The problem is that I don't take them because they are really poor. I was offered *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. One of the things that is really funny, and awesome to me, is that I turned down a movie that was then directed by the great Robert Wise. I also turned down *Annie*, which was made by John Huston!"

So is *Innocent Blood* going to be bringing something new and different to the horror genre? Not according to Landis, who cynically admits: "There's nothing in movies that hasn't been done before 1926. It's like a decade thing. Each decade there's a period where there are A-horror films, B-horror films, C-horror films. It's the same with Westerns, love stories, gangster movies. Each decade has a renaissance, and they start over again on the same old thing."

"In that way I don't think *Innocent Blood* is a different take on horror films. I didn't think *An American Werewolf* was a different

take on horror films. I think the reason *American Werewolf* was so successful was that my approach was extremely realistic. The humour came out of the basic absurdity of the situation. The reason that *Werewolf* was funny was because the situation was funny. It struck a nerve because it was how real people would react in those circumstances."

Though *American Werewolf* was not a monster hit at cinemas, it made a small fortune when released on video. "Polygram made 12 feature films," chuckles Landis, "and *American Werewolf* was the only one of them that made a profit. In fact I have just signed a deal with Polygram to make a sequel. I'm writing it now and will be filming it next year. I don't want to say much about it now, but it's a true sequel, and involves most of the same characters, who will be played by most of the same actors."

In the meantime it's doubtful whether *Innocent Blood* will inspire a follow-up. The film's UK release was held up due to its poor box office performance in the States, and we can now expect it to be making an exit to the video racks early in 1994. It's a bloody shame, but we'll be waiting, like the suckers we are...

